



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women

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Technical Intervention Area Summary Notes: TIA-C

Handbook for Action-Oriented Research on the Worst Forms of Child Labour Including Trafficking in Children

The below is a summary of the RWG-CL¹ handbook for action-oriented research on the worst forms of child labour including trafficking in children. The handbook is designed to assist researchers from local government, non-government, and international organizations who may have limited experience conducting research on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking. It offers clear guidelines complete with ideas, specific steps, and ethical guidelines in a straightforward manner. While extensive literature exists on child research, this manual attempts to supplement by providing context on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, and focuses on unique elements of action-oriented, child-centred research.

This easy-to-use book includes three parts:

Part I: Explains words, ideas, and principles

Part II: Provides a step by step guide to the process of research

Part III: Describes methods to use in research tools and examples of how they have been used by others

Part I: WORDS, IDEAS, AND PRINCIPLES

1 The idea of child-centered participatory research

The first stage in research remains understanding its purpose and the consequent principles on which it is based:

- **Action-oriented research** is conducted explicitly for the purpose of developing research-based programmes, collecting research needed to design practical solutions to practical problems;
- When the results of action-oriented research are sufficiently convincing, action plans can be designed, even if the research process is incomplete;
- Research on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, requires a novel approach that integrates children into the process and enables them to express themselves; the approach must be **participatory** and **child-centered**;
- Research that engages children must take into account their whole lives and not concentrate on a single aspect, since **children** are **subjects of human rights**;
- ILO Convention 182 maintains that the **four** main areas of the worst forms of child labor concern: forced labor and trafficking, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, and hazardous work; trafficking in children includes more than kidnapping and sale;

¹ The RWG-CL is the Regional Working Group on Child Labour in Asia, a joint initiative of SC-Alliance, WVI, CWA, UNICEF, and ILO-IPEC.

- Action-oriented research can result in practical **interventions** including skills training, poverty reduction programs, removal of children from the worst form labor conditions, re-integration programs, raising public awareness, and reducing the demand for child laborers.

2 Action-oriented participatory research with children and about children

- Children must always be allowed to speak for themselves, since they can speak most accurately about their own lives;
- Research with children starts with children's abilities, considers differences between groups of children, listens to children's views and ideas, and tries to involve children at all levels of research. They must be protected by a code of ethics for researchers;
- Establishing trust and rapport between children and researchers is critical and involves a two-way relationship that develops over time;
- Appropriate research methods must be used with children, particularly those that decrease researchers' power and give children greater autonomy.

3 Action-oriented research on the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking

- Inadequate definitions and concepts currently hinder the process; furthermore, data on employers of child labor are lacking, policy analysis underlying policy formation are lacking, and assessment of programme impact, good practices, and lessons learned are minimal;
- As most existing research has serious limitations, action-oriented, participatory, children-centered research must be conducted to gather reliable data on WFCL, including trafficking;
- Research must be based on an understanding of the wider context; results of situation analyses and rapid assessments may provide useful information on the wider context;
- **Triangulation** is an effective method of research, whereby information at every level is cross-checked against information from other sources and about other groups. This process takes into account different methods, definitions, and assumptions;
- The action oriented research process consists of 12 distinctive steps which encompass 5 levels: preparation, protocol design, data collection, analysis and report writing, and follow up. Each step must be properly carried out to enhance collective progress.

PART II: ACTION-ORIENTED RESEARCH: A TWELVE -STEP PROCESS

Level 5 -- Follow up		Step 12: Disseminate report, store data, and make action plans
		Step 11: Prepare Research Report
Level 4 – Analysis & report writing		Step 10: Data Analysis
		Step 9: Second Phase of Data Collection
		Step 8: Preliminary Analysis of Collected Data
Level 3 – Data collection		Step 7: First Phase of Data Collection
		Step 6: Pilot Research Tools and Finalize Research Plan
		Step 5: Develop Research Tools
Level 2 – Protocol design		Step 4: Develop Detailed Research Questions
		Step 3: Collect, Review, and analyze Secondary Data
		Step 2: Define Research Aims and Major Research Questions
Level 1 - Preparation	Step 1: Identify Stakeholders and The Research Team	

Level 1: Preparation

Step 1: Identify stakeholders and the research team

- Identify and engage those people and institutions interested in the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, who are in a position to take action based on substantive research. **Stakeholders** can include clients, development agencies, donors, relatives, professionals, community leaders, agency administrator, volunteers, or child laborers;
- Raise awareness and build commitment among stakeholders;
- Identify researchers among the stakeholders. They need to be selected at the beginning of research and must have a broad range of complimentary skills.

Step 2: Define research aims and major research questions

- Arrange meetings for stakeholders to discuss relevant issues and find out what they already know; subsequent research must have a clear, agreed upon aim;
- Brainstorm with stakeholders to define the aim of research and the specific knowledge about child labor and trafficking the team seeks to ascertain;
- Agree on the key questions the research can and will answer within practical constraints (such as time, money, and skills);
- Key research questions must be systematically grouped and prioritized.

Step 3: Collect, review, and analyze secondary data

- Compile existing books, research reports, statistics, policy, videos, legal and programme documents, and other literature relevant to the key research questions identified;
- Consider the assumptions, questions, and data collection methods used in this secondary data. Compare and contrast secondary data; attempt to explain inconsistencies;
- Try to re-calculate and analyze statistics to make them child-centered. When analyzing data it should be recognized that different organizations have different objectives in collecting and processing data;
- Possible sources for additional information about children include: children exploited through commercial sex, child domestic workers, children living in the street, and trafficked children.

Level 2: Protocol design

Step 4: Develop detailed research questions

- Based on the topic of research and analysis of secondary data, stakeholders identify specific questions for research;
- Research questions structure the research. They are not hypotheses to be proved or disproved and should not be confused with lower-level questions asked in interviews or questionnaires.

Step 5: Develop research tools

- Consider different ways of collecting data required to answer key questions;
- Choose research tools in light of the aim, topic, key research questions, source of information, and participants;
- Research methods can be collective or individual;
- Include an ethical strategy in the protocol;
- For research on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking, opportunistic and snowball sampling are particularly useful.

Step 6: Pilot research tools and finalize research plan

- Once research tools have been designed, run a pilot of each one;
- Based on these piloting results, modify or adapt research tools accordingly;
- Make provisions to ensure the security of researchers when researching illegal activities;
- Finalize practical and logistical preparations (such as field timetable, budget, transport, equipment) and include this in the protocol;
- Prepare fieldwork (team size, programme, logistics) so that data can be collected efficiently without undue strain on researchers or participants.

Level 3: Data collection

Step 7: First phase of data collection

- Research team uses the protocol to collect data (following the "code of ethics" and using all research tools);
- Systematically record data;
- Regular team meetings ensure proper use is made of the research protocol;
- Resolve ethical dilemmas in team meetings;
- **Adopt helpful research attitudes:**
 - listen actively, with respect for children's, women's and men's knowledge, experience, analysis, feelings, and thinking;
 - Do not dominate through verbal communication, body language, or attitudes;
 - Create trust and equality: share information and knowledge.

Step 8: Preliminary analysis of collected data

Researchers must:

- Analyze data collected thus far;
- Check recording and indexing;
- Develop categories;
- Review the research tools and modify them if necessary;
- Consider what collected data have revealed about the research questions;
- Modify or add new questions or hypotheses if required;
- Add new samples or field work sites if required;
- Pilot new research tools;
- Revise the protocol for the second phase of data collection;
- Researchers must meet to review data collection and ethical issues everyday.

Step 9: Second phase of data collection:

Research teams continue to:

- Collect data using the revised research protocol;
- Index data, keeping systematic records;
- Resolve ethical dilemmas, meeting daily to review these issues;
- Research teams complete data collection in all sites, with all groups.

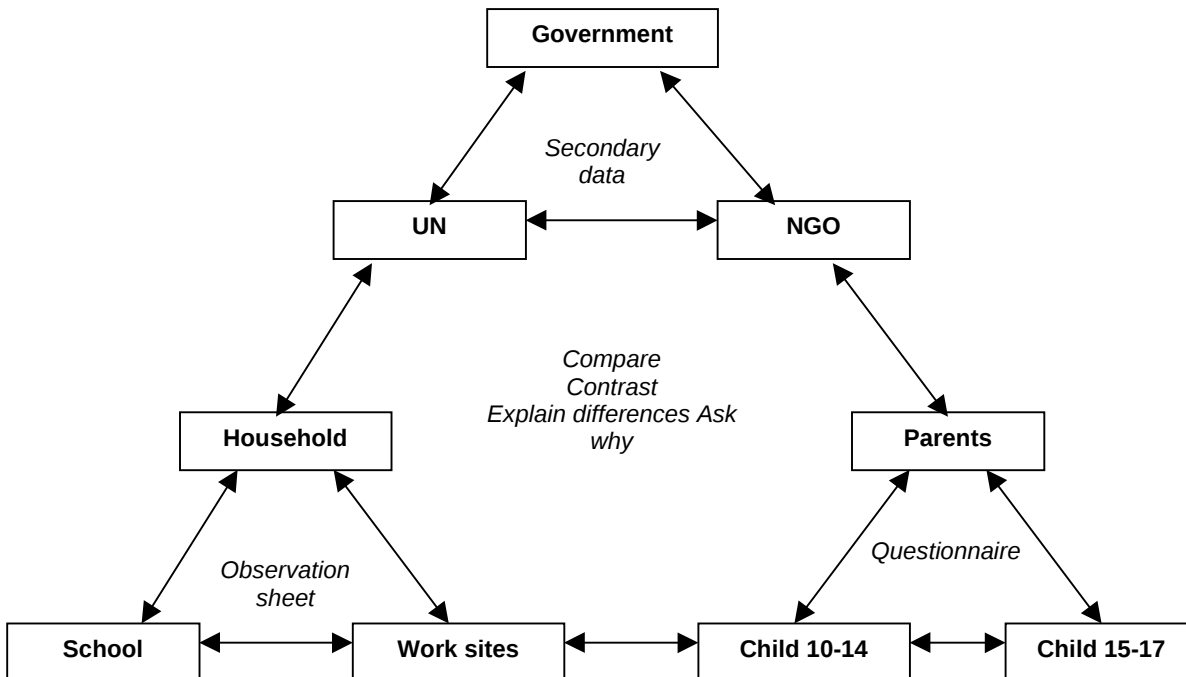
Level 4: Analysis & report writing

Step 10: Data Analysis

- Sort and aggregate the collected data;

- Conduct both quantitative and qualitative analysis;
- Look for contradictions, gaps, or weaknesses in the data;
- Involve all stakeholders in data analysis;
- Interpret the results by triangulating between tools and categories of data;
- Triangulate the data and identify main trends (See Figure 4.1).

4.1 Comparing & contrasting data sets through triangulation



Step 11: Prepare Research Report

- Concentrate on writing the research report; do not get distracted by glossaries and contents lists;
- Use direct, plain language; avoid technical jargon, emotive language, and language intended to shock;
- Make clear, practical recommendations keeping in mind that children and adults must not be harmed by the information or style of the report;
- Send draft report to key informants and stakeholders for comments;
- Report writers follow ethical strategy when writing up the research results (e.g. ensuring anonymity in texts and photos);
- Write the executive summary last.

Level 5: Follow-up

Step 12: Disseminate report, store data, and make action plans.

- Decide upon a strategy for sharing the report with different stakeholders; lack of control over dissemination can lead to misrepresentation and issues being sensationalized;
- Disseminate research results so as to maximize awareness and impact among the people and institutions that will act upon them; conclusions and results should also be shared with children;
- Research should be made available in local languages so as to facilitate action planning;
- Store the raw data and research protocol so that other researchers may have access to them;

- An advocacy strategy should ensure the report is circulated and disseminated to the people and institutions able to act upon or influence the situation of child laborers and trafficked children at three levels: policy, programme and project, and participants.

PART III: HANDBOOK TOOLKIT

A. Essentials for a protocol

1. Informed Consent

Ethical strategies must include detailed strategies of obtaining **informed consent**: agreement for voluntary participation of a participant in research, based on the individual fully understanding the goals, methods, benefits and risks of the study. This must be given on the understanding that the participant can change his or her mind and withdraw involvement at any time.

2. Standard Observation Sheet

This aid to research provides scientific control for the research process as a whole. The purpose of this protocol item is to enable collected data to be compared between different times, places, groups, and researchers as well as to keep track of data collected using each research tool. There is little variation in standard observation sheets of different protocols.

3. Sampling

Researchers begin by selecting general groups of children and adults who are involved in or have knowledge of the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking and then use specific techniques or sampling frames for each group. Age groups, gender ratios and other comparative factors must be kept constant throughout the protocol.

Frequent forms of sampling include: cluster, convenience, opportunistic, purposive, quota, random, representative, and snowball sampling.

B. Research methods

1. Research Diary

Each researcher should keep a diary from the start of the process with daily records of:

- The day's events
- Ethical issues; possible problems & solutions
- Questions and possible answers ("hypotheses")
- Brief unstructured observations
- Records of conversations
- Impressions and feelings; ideas about the meaning of what happened.
- Comments about the fieldwork or the research in general.
- "To Do" lists

2. Observation

Observation remains vital for understanding context. It may be structured or unstructured, and should be a daily activity. Brief observations should be recorded in the research diary.

Unstructured observations during research on the commercial sexual exploitation of children might include involvement at places known for commercial sexual activities, including:

- Saturday or Sunday night in a town's main bar area
- Discotheque or karaoke bars late night
- Public parks in the early evening
- Tourist beaches
- Railway or bus stations

Structured observations are usually designed after other methods have identified themes, times, places, and hypotheses about frequencies and timing. These observations can be based on:

- Frequency of events, activities, or behavior
- Events at regular intervals at the same place (for example, checking outside a brothel every 20 minutes to see what happens and who is there)
- Duration of events - for example, the time a sexually exploited child spends with each customer.
- Sample of people - watching the individual activities and reactions of a child for half an hour, then repeating the observation with other children.

3. Time Use and Recall

Researchers often record the tasks and duration of these activities carried out by children.

A variety of techniques are used, but there are two basic methods: time use (recording as it happens) and recall (remembered events).

Time Use can be recorded through observation charts while researchers watch children work.

Alternatively, children can fill in the daily time sheets themselves to track how they spend their time: travelling to work, working, eating, performing household chores, playing, and sleeping.

In the **Recall Method**, participants are asked to recall past events - either specific or routine activities, typically using some sort of chart. Typical topics for recall include daily routines (all activities during the previous 24 hours, or week) or daily food consumption (all types of food consumed in the previous 24 hours). Probing questions can be added to ensure information is complete.

4. Ranking

Ranking is a method that identifies individuals' and groups' preferences and priorities. They use words, objects, cards, or visual images to rank ideas, events, people, things, types of activities, and almost any aspect of their lives. For instance, a group of villagers might generate a list of reasons why a child could be trafficked, and rank them in order of importance or prevalence. Topics can be divided into three main groups:

- Priorities and preferences
- Criteria and reasons
- Wealth and status

Wealth ranking allows the research team to understand wealth inequalities in a community, discover local indicators of poverty and wealth, and establish the relative social positions of households. This type of ranking is also useful as an introduction to discussing coping strategies, opportunities, problems, and possible solutions.

5. Focus Group Discussions

These discussions focus on a specific topic; they are useful in exploring agreed upon ideas and attitudes, especially early in research, in order to find out what questions to ask and what words to use in interviews and questionnaires. It must be remembered that focus groups do not produce factual data, but are useful in identifying the knowledge, ideas, norms, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and perceptions of a particular group.

A focus group discussion requires:

- 8 to 15 participants with the same characteristics (age, gender, employment, and wealth).
- A comfortable place without interruptions or speculators; sufficient space for everyone to sit in a circle.
- A set time for discussion (no less than one hour and not normally more than two).
- A list of ideas, questions, or topics to be covered from the relevant research tool.
- A skilled facilitator, and at least one skilled note taker.

6. Visual Methods

Visual methods can include drawings, sculptures, masks, maps, puppets, photographs, and videos produced by participants. These methods can be especially useful in working with children (and adults) who find verbal expression difficult, or in situations that are hard or embarrassing to talk about. It can often be easier to respond to a picture, photograph, or other visual image than to a question.

There are **two fundamental rules** for all work with **visual methods**:

- **Interpretation:** pictures, drawings, diagrams, and maps must be interpreted by their authors. It is unethical and unscientific for the researcher to interpret visuals without consulting the original authors.
- **Ownership:** participants own the pictures they create. Ask permission before presenting diagrams, maps, drawings, and photographs for further distribution or publication. Always be sure to credit the original artist if this is desired.

7. Role Play

Role play can help establish rapport with children and give those who are less articulate an opportunity to express themselves. Drama also represents a means in which children can revisit a painful experience with less danger of being re-traumatized. Dramatic forms vary with culture. Puppet theatre, song, dance, poetry, proverbs, and songs are some ways of communicating with children or expressing social and politically challenging topics.

8. Written Methods

Written methods include essays, lists, diaries, and recall charts kept by children who are literate and/or in school. They are particularly helpful for collecting large data sets if they are used in schools, whether formal or informal. These methods provide valuable insight into childrens' lives. An effective method for exploring sensitive issues is sentence completion, where children are given a number of sentence stems to fill in with their own words, such as "I am good at...."...."I am afraid of ..."

To collect written information from groups of children:

- Give clear and consistent instructions (the exact words used by researchers should be written in the research tool).
- Stress that there are no good or bad, right or wrong answers.
- Do not give marks and ignore spelling mistakes
- If the exercise is done in a classroom, the researcher, not the teacher, should give instructions to the children.
- Ask permission about possibly publishing writing, and ask if they wish their names to be used.

9. Interviews

Interview methods include informal, unstructured discussions on relatively undefined topics; semi-structured interactions about pre-defined topics; and a variety of written questionnaires. While interviews are the best known of all social research methods, this does not guarantee they are the best methods to use, especially with children. Designing a successful interview tool is challenging. Helpful guidelines:

- Questions that start with 'who, what, when, where, why, and how' help to establish the situation. Use these as prompts (reminders for the researcher).
- Pay close attention to the participants' body language and facial expression, for they can often reveal if an answer is truthful.
- Observe the participant and the participant's surroundings during the interview. Observation data can be important additional information and can be used to interpret the answers of the interviewee.

Surveys represent an additional means of obtaining child-centred data on the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking. Researchers can try to add questions relevant to these issues in regularly conducted household surveys. Contact the National Statistics Office and donor agencies (e.g. World Bank, UN Organizations, DFID, SIDA) for assistance.

C. Using methods to design research tools

Methods described in the previous section can be used to design research tools for a research protocol. Some examples include:

1. Protection Shield

Respondents provide answers to the following 5 categories:

- Most beautiful event
- Two people I love most
- I am best at
- If I had power
- My life motto

Aim: Research to find something out about children's support structure

Methods: Semi-structured interview with drawings used as visual stimuli

Sample: Age groups 7-12 and 13-18 years; number in each session opportunistic as this method is used to follow on from other methods used with the same children.

2. Children's Support Networks

Respondents are given a questionnaire with a series of questions such as:

- Who do you go to when you have a bad headache?
- Who do you go to for new clothes?
- Who do you go to when you feel lonely?
- Who would you go to if you were very sick?
- Who do you go to for advice?

Aim: To identify the sources of support used by individual children in a range of different situations.

Methods: Semi-structured interview with drawings used as visual stimuli

Sample: Individual orphans and street children, age 8-18, with whom rapport has already been established; snowball sampling to include as many children as possible, both boys and girls.

3. Community Prevention of Trafficking

Participants collectively identify reasons for success and lack of success to answer the question, "How successfully are we preventing trafficking and labour exploitation in the community?"

Aim: To gather community opinions on how to best prevent trafficking, identify the obstacles faced and suggestions for how to overcome them.

Methods: Listing and ranking, followed by focus group discussion.

Sample: Three to four groups of three to 10 literate people of similar ages and gender, such as: girls 10-15yrs, boys 10-14yrs, girls 15-17yrs, boys 15-17yrs, etc.

4. Storyboard for Identifying Reasons for Migrating

Children are asked to draw family members and simulate migration scenarios in order to identify perceived reasons behind migration and feelings related to such movement.

Aim: To identify factors affecting children's decisions to migrate and to find out more about children's attitudes, values, and knowledge about migration for work.

Methods: Drawings, used as visual stimuli for focus group discussion.

Sample:

- Literate children age 9-15 years
- One group of girls and one group of boys
- Each group should have between 6 and 10 participants.

D. Minimum time-frame for a research plan using the 12 steps

1st month - Steps 1-3

- Key stakeholders decide on purpose, topic, and research questions;
- Assemble research team (including stakeholders);
- Collect and review secondary data.

2nd month – Steps 4-6

- Draft research protocol and detailed research questions;
- Design research tools for data collection and pilot test them;
- Build capacity of stakeholders/research team (ongoing process);
- Select sample locations and groups of people;
- Agree on ethical guidelines;
- Finalize research protocol and prepare for field work.

3rd month – Steps 7-9

- First phase of data collection. Separate research teams collect data simultaneously. Each team works in one district. Using the research protocol, each team completes data collection in one of the communities;
- The research teams meet to analyze and discuss preliminary results of data collection in the first communities. They share the preliminary analysis with participants, get feedback and revise the research protocol as necessary;
- Each of the teams goes on to the second phase of data collection, working in their districts and completing the research in the remaining communities.

4th month – Steps 10-11

- Research team organizes, categorizes, codes and sorts data;
- Interpretation and triangulation of data;
- Team gets feedback from participants on the main results;
- Prepare draft of research report, ensuring the confidentiality of participants (names, photographs, etc).

5th month – Step 11

- Draft report is circulated to key informants, stakeholders and other researchers;
- Receive input and comments on draft research report.

6th month – Step 12

- Research report is finalized and circulated
- A successful strategy is developed to communicate the results to all stakeholders;
- Report is circulated and disseminated;
- The raw research data is archived for use by other researchers;
- Advocacy to promote action by relevant people/institutions based on research results.